

# Lamento del Barista

for vocal quartet and piano

an homage to Monteverdi's *Lamento della Ninfa*, in Brooklyn

Music and Lyrics by Conrad Cummings



## Program Note

“It needs to be about New York City, but not Manhattan-centric.” That’s what Jesse Blumberg, Artistic Director of the Five Boroughs Music Festival, asked for in his commission for the Five Boroughs Songbook. “Write for anything from one to four singers, plus piano.” Well of course, go for four.

After a long and fruitless search for existing texts, I realized I had to do my own. It used to be that I felt hopelessly unhip when I got out of the subway at Bedford Street in Brooklyn’s Williamsburg neighborhood, but in the last few years hipdom has moved further east, and now I have to get off the L train at the Morgan Avenue stop to feel totally passé among the nineteenth-century beards and the twenty-first century tattoos.

So I thought of a barista faced with these changing times. And of my all-time favorite composition, Monteverdi's proto-opera “Lamento della Ninfa.” Similarities between Monteverdi’s and my “Lamento”’s are purely intentional. Consider my piece a love-letter to his.

And for the Williamsburg/Bushwick non-initiates, some notes on the text:

- Bedford, the L-train stop in the heart of Williamsburg, used to be crazy hip, now more crazy swank
- Bushwick, what Williamsburg was ten years ago, five more stops into Brooklyn on the L-train
- Roberta’s, iconic Bushwick Michelin-starred, picnic-tables-in-an-old-industrial-space restaurant
- Bogart and Morgan, two streets running through the heart of Bushwick. Exit the Morgan Avenue stop on the L-train to either of these streets and feel like the unhippest person in the world if you’re over thirty and absent an artistic tattoo and a 19-century beard
- The 6, perhaps the least hip subway line in NYC, navigating as it does both the Upper East Side and the Bronx. It will take you to Pelham Bay Park, a mere 29 stations and two hours after you transfer to it from the L

It's dawn. The violet light had not yet  
Emerged from beyond the BQE,  
When up from the subway stop called Bedford  
A youth stepped out, reluctantly.

*s*  
His brow is furrowed, he heaves a sigh.  
He starts to speak. He stops. He's stunned.  
The Apple Store's windows reflect his dejection.  
He's been betrayed, his lattes shunned.

"Ai, Ai, Ai,"  
    poor barista.

"How can your lips touch another man's foam?"  
Poor barista.

    "You said that you loved my macchiatos."

Thus under Williamsburg's skies he moans.

"Where is loyalty, where is trust?  
You've all moved to Bushwick, you've killed my cafe.  
There's no time to get bearded like Abraham Lincoln.  
My one small tattoo isn't fit for display."

Poor barista, he knows in the land of Roberta's,  
On Bogart or Morgan his look just won't play.

"I'll move to the Bronx, start a new single origin  
Eco-cafe beside Pelham Bay.

What am I saying? You won't ride the six.  
There's no hope, all that's left me is doing today  
What I dread, signing papers to work at the Starbucks  
On Bedford and Seventh for substandard pay.

I curse you, you hipsters, in search of the latest  
Sensation. My coffee is second to none!  
To hell with you! I'll wear my apron so proudly,  
And I'll be there after your neighborhood's done!"

He steps to the Starbucks, dejected and fierce,  
Thrusts a fist to the heavens, and inside he goes.  
Thus mixes fire and ice in the borough  
Where many court hipness, and some find woe.



# Lamento del Barista

an homage to Monteverdi's *Lamento della Ninfa*, in Brooklyn

for vocal quartet and piano

commissioned by the Five Boroughs Music Festival for the  
Five Borough Song Book Vol II

v 5/15/18

Music and lyrics: Conrad Cummings

**Sostenuto** ♩ = 40

1 *pp*

Soprano

It's dawn, the viol - let light had not yet E merged from be-yond the B Q E, When

Mezzo-soprano

It's dawn, the viol - let light had not yet E merged from be-yond the B Q E, When

Tenor

Baritone

It's dawn, the viol - let light had not yet E merged from be-yond the B Q E, When

**Sostenuto** ♩ = 40

Piano

\* Within the general frame of the notation, modify rhythms freely to maximize clarity and expressiveness of text, just as you would for Monteverdi.

4 *p*

up from the sub - way stop called Bed - ford A youth stepped out re - luc - tant - ly. His

*p*

up from the sub - way stop called Bed - ford A youth stepped out re - luc - tant - ly. His

*p*

up from the sub - way stop called Bed - ford A youth stepped out re - luc - tant - ly. His

6 *pp* *poco*

brow is fur rowed, he heaves a sigh. He starts to speak. He stops. He's stunned. The

*pp* *poco*

brow is fur rowed, he heaves a sigh. He starts to speak. He stops. He's stunned. The

*pp* *poco*

brow is fur rowed, he heaves a sigh. He starts to speak. He stops. He's stunned. The



Piu mosso ♩ = 52

rall. . . . .

8

Ap-ple Store's win-dows re-flect his de-jec-tion. He's been be-trayed, his lattes shunned.

Ap-ple Store's win-dows re-flect his de-jec-tion. He's been be-trayed, his lattes shunned.

Ap-ple Store's win-dows re-flect his de-jec-tion. He's been be-trayed, his lattes shunned.

Piu mosso ♩ = 52

rall. . . . .

very broad

♩ = 40

12

poor bar is - ta. poor bar

poor bar is - ta. poor bar

Ai, ai, ai, How can your lips touch an-oth er man's foam? —

very broad

♩ = 40

15 **piu mosso** ♩. = 56**meno mosso** ♩. = 42

is - ta. Thus un - der Wil-liams-burg's skies he moans.

is - ta. Thus un - der Wil-liams-burg's skies he moans.

— You said that you loved my mac-chia- tos.

is - ta. Thus un - der Wil-liams-burg's skies he moans.

**piu mosso** ♩. = 56**meno mosso** ♩. = 42

**poco piu mosso** ♩. = 48

17

*mf*

Where is loy - al - ty? Where is trust? You've all moved to Bush-wick, you've killed my ca - fe. There's no

**poco piu mosso** ♩. = 48*mf*

**meno mosso** 5  
♩. = 42

19

Musical score for measures 19-20. It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line starts with a rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. The piano accompaniment consists of chords in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. Dynamics include *p* and *f*.

time to get beard-ed like Ab - ra - ham Lin - coln. My one small ta - too is - n't fit for dis - play.

**meno mosso**  
♩. = 42

Piano accompaniment for measures 19-20. The right hand plays chords, and the left hand plays a bass line. Dynamics include *f*.

21

Musical score for measures 21-22. It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line starts with a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, and a quarter note C5. The piano accompaniment consists of chords in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. Dynamics include *mf* and *p*.

is - ta, he knows in the land of Ro - bert - a's On Bo - gart or Mor - gan his look just won't play.

is - ta, he knows in the land of Ro - bert - a's On Bo - gart or Mor - gan his look just won't play.

is - ta, he knows in the land of Ro - bert - a's On Bo - gart or Mor - gan his look just won't play.

Piano accompaniment for measures 21-22. The right hand plays chords, and the left hand plays a bass line. Dynamics include *p* and *mf*.

23 **piu mosso** ♩. = 52

8 move to the Bronx, start a new sin - gle or - i - gin E - co - ca - fe be - side Pel - ham Bay

**piu mosso** ♩. = 52

*p*

25 *f* *p* *poco*

8 What am I say - ing? You won't ride the six, there's no hope, all that's left me is

*f* *p* *poco*

*f* *p* *poco*

**piu mosso** ♩. = 5627 *mf* *f*

8 do - ing to - day What I dread, sign - ing pa - pers to work at the Star - bucks on

**piu mosso** ♩. = 56

*mf* *f*

29

Bed-ford and Sev-enth for sub-stan-dard pay. I curse you, you

8<sup>vb</sup>

Detailed description: This block contains the musical notation for measures 29 and 30. The vocal line is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature. The lyrics are "Bed-ford and Sev-enth for sub-stan-dard pay. I curse you, you". The piano accompaniment consists of block chords in the right hand and single notes in the left hand. A dynamic marking of *8<sup>vb</sup>* is present at the start of the piano part.

31

hip - sters, in search of the lat - est sen - sa - tion. My cof - fee is se - cond to

Detailed description: This block contains the musical notation for measures 31 and 32. The vocal line continues with the lyrics "hip - sters, in search of the lat - est sen - sa - tion. My cof - fee is se - cond to". The piano accompaniment features block chords in the right hand and single notes in the left hand.

33

none. To hell with you! I'll

*ff* *f*

*ff*

8<sup>vb</sup> Ped.

Detailed description: This block contains the musical notation for measures 33 and 34. The vocal line includes the lyrics "none. To hell with you! I'll". Dynamic markings of *ff* and *f* are placed above the vocal line. The piano accompaniment has *ff* markings above the right hand and *8<sup>vb</sup>* below the left hand. A *Ped.* marking is at the bottom.

**meno mosso**

♩. = 52

**rall.** . . . . .

*mf*

35

wear my ap - ron so proud - ly, And I'll be there

**meno mosso**

♩. = 52

**rall.** . . . . .

*mf*



**piu mosso**

♩ = 63

*p* **sostenuto**

37

♩. = 44 **rit.** . . . . .

♩. = 40 or less

He

*p* **sostenuto**

He

*p*

af - ter your neigh - bor - hood's done.

*p* **sostenuto**

He

♩. = 44 **rit.** . . . . .

♩. = 40 or less

**piu mosso**

♩ = 63

39

steps to the Star-bucks, de - ject - ed and fierce, Thrusts a fist to the hea - vens, and

steps to the Star-bucks, de - ject - ed and fierce, Thrusts a fist to the hea - vens, and

steps to the Star-bucks, de - ject - ed and fierce, Thrusts a fist to the hea - vens, and

*p* *sostenuto*

Detailed description: This block contains the musical notation for measures 39, 40, and 41. It features three vocal staves (Soprano, Alto, and Bass) and a piano accompaniment. The vocal parts are in 4/4 time and contain the lyrics: "steps to the Star-bucks, de - ject - ed and fierce, Thrusts a fist to the hea - vens, and". The piano accompaniment is in 4/4 time, with the right hand playing chords and the left hand playing a simple bass line. The dynamic marking is *p* *sostenuto*.



42

in - side he goes. Thus mix - es fi - re and

in - side he goes. Thus mix - es fi - re and

in - side he goes. Thus mix - es fi - re and

*pp*

*pp*

*pp*

*pp*

Detailed description: This block contains the musical notation for measures 42, 43, and 44. It features three vocal staves (Soprano, Alto, and Bass) and a piano accompaniment. The vocal parts are in 4/4 time and contain the lyrics: "in - side he goes. Thus mix - es fi - re and". The piano accompaniment is in 4/4 time, with the right hand playing chords and the left hand playing a simple bass line. The dynamic marking is *pp* (pianissimo).

**poco meno mosso**

♩ = 58

**allargando**

♩ = 52

44

ice in the bor - ough Where man - y seek hip - ness, and

ice in the bor - ough Where man - y seek hip - ness, and

ice in the bor - ough Where man - y seek hip - ness, and

**poco meno mosso**

♩ = 58

**allargando**

♩ = 52



**broaden** -----



46

some find woe.

some find woe.

some find woe.

**broaden**